



MINISTRY OF INTERIOR



SALZBURG FORUM MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Budapest, Hungary

19-20 June 2017

JOINT DECLARATION

The Ministers of Interior of the Salzburg Forum Member States met on 19-20th June 2017, upon the invitation of the Hungarian Presidency of the Salzburg Forum.

The Conference was also attended by the respective Ministers belonging to the Group of Friends from the Western Balkans and Moldova, as well as by representatives of the European Commission, Europol, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, Interpol and ICMPD.

The participating Ministers have agreed on the following in relation to the main agenda points discussed:

1. Border security, migration, asylum

The Ministers of Interior of the Salzburg Forum stated that illegal migration pressure at the South-Eastern external land borders of the European Union is currently perceived as relatively low compared to the years 2015 and 2016. This pressure has decreased due to the result of both the EU-Turkey Joint Statement and the determined efforts of some EU Member States and non-EU countries implemented with the aim of the protection of the external borders. They recognized the importance of the prevention of the development of a crisis situation similar to the one that emerged in 2015, and reiterated their common support to all regional cooperation initiatives serving this purpose. The Ministers stressed that in the future, the basis for managing migratory flows must be the reduction or stemming of the flows to the greatest possible extent; and – wherever possible – the prevention of illegal migration already in countries of origin and transit. This should be the primary aim of any common action in the framework of the EU migration policy.

The Ministers of Interior of the Salzburg Forum also took note of the results achieved at EU level in relation to large-scale information systems, and in this regard called for the swift implementation of the Entry/Exit System. They discussed their respective experience on the challenges of the implementation of the recent introduction of systematic checks on persons enjoying the right to free movement at the EU external borders and at internal borders between them in relation to which border checks have not yet been lifted, which have significantly increased their burdens and requires constant developments, but also flexibility as regards the workload at the border crossing points.

The Ministers discussed relocation; they also underlined the importance of reforming the Dublin system to allow prevention of a possible future crisis and also underlined that in their opinion, the broadest possible consensus should be reached among Member States over the reform of the Common European Asylum System, in line with the European Council's Conclusions of December 2016. They agreed that the common asylum policy needs to be strengthened against asylum abuse and increasing economic migration.

2. Fight against terrorism, organized crime and information exchange

The Ministers have strongly condemned the latest terrorist attacks in Europe and worldwide, and expressed their condolences to the families of the victims. They reinforced their commitment to further develop common actions to counter terrorism in order to avoid existing shortcomings, with regard to the priorities in the report of the High Level Working Group on Information Systems and Interoperability and the Council Conclusions on the improvement of interoperability. They also agreed on the importance of enhancing information sharing on radicalised persons or suspected foreign fighters, also in relation to the monitoring of their movements and to the investigations against them, especially in relation to individuals transiting through or arriving in our countries with the intention of committing terrorist attacks. Moreover, the Ministers highlighted the importance of prevention and the promotion of European values.

The Ministers agreed on the importance of retention of telecommunication data for the law enforcement purposes underlying the need to jointly look for possible solutions at the EU level that would guarantee the high level of internal security of the EU.

In relation to the above stated, the Ministers encouraged the information exchange at regional level, with special focus to the exchange of PNR data, as well as the deployment of Joint Investigation Teams. It was also underlined that the cooperation among counter-terrorisms centres of the Member States should be enhanced.

The Ministers of Interior of the Salzburg Forum and the Ministers belonging to the Group of Friends from the Western Balkans and Moldova condemned the recent cyberattacks and urged improvements in the cooperation among internet service providers, developers, law-

enforcement agencies and international organizations, as well as the development of appropriate legislation in this area.

3. Cross-border enforcement of road traffic fines

The Ministers of Interior of the Salzburg Forum underlined the importance of maintaining their regional cooperation on road safety as one of the priorities of the Forum, and agreed to continue to strive to develop instruments among interested countries which enable more efficient cooperation of the authorities responsible for the implementation of the Directive 413/2015/EU on information exchange on cross-border implementation of road traffic fines.

4. Illegal migration along the Western Balkan route

The Ministers of Interior of the Salzburg Forum and the Ministers belonging to the Group of Friends from the Western Balkans and Moldova reviewed the current situation of illegal migration in the region, and shared with each other their experience concerning the latest trends. They pointed out that the situation – although stable at the moment – is fragile, and agreed that attention must be paid to the link between religious extremism, terrorism and illegal migration in order to prevent repeated terrorist attacks in Europe more effectively.

5. Joint Action Plan

At the conference “Managing Migration Challenges Together” of the Ministers of Interior and the Ministers of Defence in Vienna on 8 February 2017 ministers who have adopted the Joint Declaration agreed to elaborate a Joint Action Plan. The Ministers took note of the work on the Joint Action Plan under Austrian lead. Moreover, those who are involved agreed on a meeting at the operational level in order to discuss and define the operational implementation of the Joint Action Plan.

6. Overview of the Hungarian Presidency of the Salzburg Forum

The Ministers took note of and welcomed the results of the expert-level meetings held during the last semester:

- the meeting of the Witness Protection Working Group held on 4–5 April in Budapest, where the parties informed each other about the state of implementation of the Authorization card related to the carrying of firearms and ammunition on the territory of another Member State; shared their experience on the safe forms of electronic communication within the witness protection programme, and exchanged views on the exchange of classified information in the framework of international cooperation;
- the meeting of Transport Experts on 19–20 April in Budapest, which main agenda points were the overview of the Commission’s report on the implementation of the

CBE Directive, discussion on the Member States' relevant experience, and the overview of the state of implementation, current trends and related developments concerning the road safety agreement between Bulgaria, Austria, Croatia and Hungary;

- and the meeting of Police Chiefs on 10–11 May in Szeged, where the parties discussed the issues of fight against terrorism and cybercrime, border protection and migration. They stressed that the effectiveness of the fight against crime served the interest of the citizens, and underlined the need for increased involvement of third countries in international cooperation, with special regard to Western Balkan countries.

The Ministers discussed the state of play as regards the ongoing call for the position of Director General of Europol. The Ministers took note of the presentation of the Czech candidate for the position, noted the intention of Romania to also put forward a candidate, and committed themselves to coordinate a joint position of the Salzburg Forum if only one of them appears on the short list.

7. The incoming Polish Presidency of the Salzburg Forum

The Ministers welcomed the priorities of the forthcoming Polish Presidency, and expressed their intention to continue the effective cooperation on issues of common interest within the framework of the Salzburg Forum.

8. The upcoming EU Council Presidencies of Salzburg Forum Members

The Ministers agreed to make best use of the Bulgarian, Austrian and Romanian EU Council Presidencies in the joint interest of the Salzburg Forum as well as in the interest of a more united citizens-oriented and crisis-resistant European Union.

Budapest, 20 June 2017